

PRESS RELEASE

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MUSEUM UNVEILS MONUMENTAL ROMAN BRONZE SCULPTURE

The most important work of art acquired by The Cleveland Museum of Art last year, an over life-size bronze sculpture of a draped figure, thought by many scholars to represent the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, who ruled from A.D. 161 to 180, is the subject of a special exhibition within the Museum's annual *Year in Review* exhibition, on view at the Museum from February 4 through March 15, 1987.

The sculpture, which dates to the late 2nd century A.D., is one of a group of Roman bronze figures and heads--believed to have come from Turkey--that appeared on the Western art market in the 1960s. They have been widely exhibited and published since then, and many are now in museums and private collections. The sculptures represent members of the Antonine and Severan dynasties who ruled the Roman empire from the mid-second century to the mid-third century AD and may have originally stood in an imperial cult temple for the worship of deified emperors and their families.

To establish the identity of the Cleveland bronze figure, which is headless and the only draped male figure in the group, Curator of Ancient Art Arielle Kozloff and other scholars have studied the costume of the figure and the context in which it was found. First of all, they knew that Marcus Aurelius and his son Commodus were the only emperors whose portraits were missing from the group of sculptures. Second, the Cleveland bronze figure

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stands in the traditional pose and wears the costume of a philosopher--a long, rectangular robe over a short tunic, and humble traveler's sandals. Since Marcus Aurelius was famous in his own times as a Stoic philosopher as well as a strong administrator and military leader, it seems appropriate that he would have been memorialized in this way. Finally, the treatment of the drapery and the emphasis of the form of the human body beneath are characteristic of art during the time of Marcus Aurelius's reign.

All of this information is presented in the exhibition organized by Arielle Kozloff, with the assistance of Diane Kelling, a Case Western Reserve University intern in the Department of Ancient Art. Exhibited with the Cleveland bronze is one other sculpture supposedly found with it, a bronze bust of a lady, now in the Worcester (Massachusetts) Art Museum, possibly thought to portray Marcus Aurelius's wife, Faustina, or his daughter, Lucilla. Also on exhibit are a marble head of Marcus Aurelius (ca. 170-180), lent by the Art Museum, Princeton University, and a marble head of Lucius Verus, who was co-emperor with Marcus Aurelius from A.D. 161 to 169, on loan from the Toledo Museum of Art. Accompanying these sculptures are photographs of some of the other bronze figures which were part of the original find.

A group of ancient Roman coins, lent by the American Numismatic Society, portray Marcus Aurelius, members of his immediate family, and other emperors of the Antonine and Severan dynasties. Some of these coins also depict temples of the type that housed monumental imperial sculptures.

In the final section of the exhibition, Museum conservators Fred Hollendonner and Bruce Christman explain the ancient bronze-casting techniques

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which were used to create the Cleveland sculpture. X-radiographs of the bronze figure show that it was cast in 29 sections and then welded together.

"Regardless of who it might represent," said Museum Director Evan Turner, "the Museum's new acquisition is an unexcelled expression of the aesthetics, iconography, and craftsmanship of the ancient Roman Empire. It adds monumental scale to the Museum's classical galleries with a quality readily matching that of the best vases and smaller bronzes in the collection."

The Museum's March 1987 Bulletin is devoted to the study of this extraordinary object, and includes articles by Curator of Ancient Art Arielle Kozloff and by Museum conservator Bruce Christman.

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For additional information or photographs, please contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.